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ABSTRACT

Counseling psychologists have a place on professional development school (PDS) leadership teams at local schools working with universities to train teachers and improve schools. They can help team members to create healthy relationships, to function more effectively, and to develop a healthy educational environment. Two critical functions that counseling psychologists can perform in a PDS are remediation (i.e., problem resolution) and development. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with administrators, teachers, graduate students, and teacher educators who worked in PDSs. These interviews were designed to capture perceptions of the actual and potential role of counseling psychologists in PDSs in three areas: remediation, prevention, and development. Examples of remediation activities that were cited included changing negative sterotyping, easing anxiety generated by change, and intervening in dysfunctional professional relationships. Responses from interviewees indicated that a valuable developmental function of counseling psychologists was the counselors' ability to model, facilitate, and promote better communication. The preventive function is demonstrated when counseling psychologists' explore, in advance, such issues as shifts in power and participatory decision making so that PDS faculty are more prepared to understand and function in an evolving school environment. (IAH)

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Rethinking Educational Reform: The Inclusion of Counseling Psychologists on the Professional Development School (PDS) Leadership Teams and in the PDS Schools

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Introduction

A teacher educator asked the Professional Development School (PDS) team, in an urban school, to hire a consultant to teach peer counseling skills to our students. My immediate reaction was to question the effects of this strategy on the students (e.g. Would it be helpful? Was it worth the time?) It turned out that the consultant did not have expertise in counseling and was unable and unqualified to respond to the request. Since the word counseling was in the title of the strategy, I thought that someone in the counseling department at the university would know the research related to this strategy and be able to provide guidance. Thinking that counseling is counseling is counseling, I set up an appointment with the first professor whose name was suggested. And that was how the relationship between the PDSs and the professors in counseling psychology began at the university.

PDS work looks different in each site. Some universities identify a school site and labeled it a PDS. Other schools and universities are involved in deliberations about what a PDS partnership would involve. Still others agree to work out partnerships as they design and implement PDSs in their area. Not only are schools and universities working on PDSs differently, they are defining PDS in some very different ways. At this time there are no shared understandings of PDSs. Therefore, we provide a brief

description of the PDS context in which we are recommending that counseling psychologists become members.

Our PDSs use, as guidelines for their design and implementation, the National Homes Group's six principles (Holmes, 1991): 1) teach for life-long understanding; 2) hold these ambitious goals for all people's children; 3) create learning communities and learn community; 4) places for adults to learn; 5) places for inquiry and reflection and 6) new institutions created from the partnerships of schools, university, and community members. These PDSs will be entire buildings functioning like teaching hospitals. District clusters will be established and include two elementary, a middle school and a high school.

This innovative educational reform is to occur in traditional public schools. In traditional public schools, teacher and administrators hold the power and space. School norms and traditions must be understood by all participants if a healthy new partnership relationship is to be created in a particular site. University and community members are not active in the traditional public school context. However, the cultures of communities and the university play a role in the construction of the new partnership. PDS members are concerned with building a new institution and not merely the recreation of the university at a school site or the entry of community and university folks into the established school culture. It may be more accurate to describe the creation of new PDS institutions as deconstruction and construction than as simple restructuring. It is within this reform context that our ideas about the role of counseling psychologists in PDSs are presented.

Changes in a teacher educator's perceptions about the role of counseling psychologists in PDSs

Over the last three years my thoughts about the role of practicing psychologists in PDSs have changed dramatically. The following is an overview of the changes that occurred in my thinking.

At the beginning I saw counseling psychologists as operating within PDSs in a focused, isolated manner. While I had integrated the role of special education professors into the on-going school and university based reform, I did not see the same connections for the work of the counseling psychologists. When the counseling psychologist colleague who helped us decide what to do about the peer counseling strategy asked me "What is it that you are doing in these schools?" I thought, "Ah ha, here is someone who could work with the practicing school based counselors. All they do is schedule kids, and our learners need personal support. Maybe this university person could influence that work." Little did I know that she was not a school counselor.

I invited this cooperative counseling psychologist colleague to work with us at one PDS. In the time and space of a couple of school/university meetings she assertively suggested that we must not keep her outside the group of PDS folks who were trying to focus on inquiry as a means of change. I had no idea what her perceptions were, in terms of her role; what I believed was that this person would create a role. It seemed that the most supportive action we could take was to resist giving her specific tasks so that she would have the flexibility to define her role.

Right away the counseling psychologist made significant contributions. During our early interactions I found that she was a person who would talk to me about the culture of the school and the relationships of school based individuals and university folks. She listened to my concerns about the traditional school cultures. She understood the process of institutional change.

Given my work in several PDS sites I began to think that the traditional relationships within schools were not healthy. As I reflected on the school cultures, I thought that my colleague would be very helpful if she would take on the role of therapist for the leadership groups within the PDS buildings. I thought that this might be a way that we could get the help we needed in establishing healthy relationships. I thought we needed help, fixing, or remediation of some sort. It was clear that old norms in public schools (e.g., concerning what can be discussed, how it will be discussed) would not support the successful creation of a PDS. My colleague helped us by operating in this remedial role in one PDS building.

I did not hold this "fix us" perception very long: the PDS vision drew me onward. The vision of a PDS is to create a new institution and a new culture. The goal is not to fix that which is wrong within the current culture nor to work within self-imposed and sometimes unhealthy systems, but to expand the boundaries, ideas and methods of communicating to reach a more effective level of functioning. Given these objectives it was apparent to me that counseling psychologists could help the PDS leadership learn how to create healthy relationships, to function more effectively, and to develop a

healthy educational environment within the public school system. This developmental or wellness approach was congruent with the vision and goals of the PDS work.

By this point, I had concluded that two functions of the counseling psychologist were critical: remediation, for problem resolution, and development, for skill enhancement. However, I soon began to realize that many of the problems requiring remediation were ones we created in our PDS work, because we did not understand, or were unable to respond constructively to, the complexities inherent in forming new institutions and relationships. We may have glossed over certain processes and, in so doing, created a new set of problems. From this realization, I concluded that counseling psychologists' expertise could be used to provide ongoing assistance in the dynamic PDS structure. The continuous and interactive involvement of a counseling psychologist in the PDS process would serve to draw attention to potential problems, encourage the constructive resolution of conflict, and model effective communication skills and behaviors -- all for the express purpose of operating in the prevention role.

Upon reflection, the developmental process I experienced follows common sense. At first, I thought of the counseling psychologist as the doctor, who had come to cure our ills; I wanted the dis-ease to stop. Remediation of the symptoms was what I appropriately requested; when you think there may be a problem, you want the doctor to fix it. Preventive or developmental efforts, to the exclusion of remediation, would not have been helpful to me. It was only after I had perceived the effects of remediation that I

could value and cooperate with the developmental and preventive roles of the counseling psychologist.

Corroboration for my developmental experience can be derived from Abraham Maslow's theory of self-actualization. Maslow, a prominent psychological theorist, asserted that "deficiency needs", needs for survival and safety, take precedence over "being needs", needs to self-actualize and fulfil one's potential (Maslow, 1970). My initial focus on remediation derived from a preponderance of "deficiency needs". At a later time, I sought out developmental and preventive interventions from the counseling psychologist because my "being needs" came to the fore.

Other PDS members appear to undergo a similar developmental process in their collaborative relationship with the counseling psychologist. It is my belief that one's expectations and experiences of counseling psychologists are influenced, in great part, by one's developmental state. If a member has a sense of dis-ease or deficiency with their own practice, with others, or with the system, s/he is likely to view the counseling psychologist in a remediation role. However, if the member perceives that the deficiencies are no longer threatening or overwhelming, s/he will most likely view the counseling psychologist in developmental or preventative roles.

In theory the ideal role for the counseling psychologist is a prevention role. However, within the PDS change process, there are some groups and individuals that primarily need remedial help and others that primarily need developmental attention. Perhaps the most productive helping stance of a counseling psychologist, is one that is receptive to the unique needs of the PDS site at which they

work. By assessing the current dynamics and issues at a particular site, the psychologist can best discern whether a remedial, developmental or preventive focus is indicated.

Evolving Perceptions about Counseling Psychologists in Professional Development Schools

The second author conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with administrators, teachers, graduate students and teacher educators, all of whom worked in a PDS that had a counseling psychologist on staff. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the collaborators' perceptions of the actual and potential role of counseling psychologists in PDSs. Salient examples from those interviews are provided below. They are organized according to the three proposed functions of a counseling psychologist in a PDS: remediation, prevention, development. The three functions of the counseling psychologist match the developmental issues and needs of PDS members.

Remediation. Interviewed members reported numerous examples of counseling psychologist functions that fit under the category of remediation. Given that members tend to report functions that reflect their own stage of development in the collaborative process, and given that counseling psychologists are relatively new to the PDS system, it is not too surprising that many examples fell into this category. Examples noted below pertain to the counseling psychologist's role with changing negative stereotypes, easing anxiety arising from change, intervening with dysfunctional professional relationships, and operating as a perceived outsider to the PDS system.

Stereotypical assumptions are often reported by university faculty and school based members about their collaborators. Unfortunately, the assumptions create boundaries and misunderstandings when cooperating on an educational reform program such as PDS. For instance, public school faculty tend to believe that university affiliated individuals have the answers to everything, do irrelevant research, cannot understand what it is like to teach K-12 children, have long lunch periods and flexible schedules. On the other hand, university individuals tend to think that teachers do not work hard, do not stay up to date and informed, teach only from texts, are interested in learning only those things that they can use tomorrow, and do not ask questions that could benefit their teaching. Additionally, university members believe teachers are extremely technical and unoriginal in their methods.

Data from our interviews indicate that counseling psychologists can play an instrumental role with the problem. They can help to identify current beliefs and attitudes and dissolve limiting stereotypes that interfere with effective interactions. Once this ground work has been accomplished, the teachers, administrators, community and university can begin to gain a new and fuller understanding of the role and relationship necessary for the successful completion of school reform, thus moving to developmental stages.

Some administrators, teachers and teacher educators saw the counseling psychologist's role as one of providing reassurance. They reported if the feelings of fear, anxiety, apprehension and the stresses associated with change had not been normalized by the

counseling psychologist they might have been unable to move forward and constructively address issues. They felt grateful that the counseling psychologist validated their experiences in the process of change. We must acknowledge, after all, that the entrance of the university and community into schools tends to bring struggle and resistance from the teachers, teacher educators and administrators in this school reform. Resistance does not seem to be a rebellion against an idea or philosophy, but a protective stance rooted in feelings of fear and uncertainty. The rapid changes and new approaches to curriculum design and teaching calls into question the old philosophies, styles, techniques, beliefs, and values. These PDS members are threatened that the PDS project is suggesting, or will suggest, that what they have been doing, and how they have been thinking about education is somehow "wrong".

The early development of a PDS is an emotional time for its members. They undergo a process of reform that will reshape not only the university and teacher education, but also the school and teacher's classroom. These changes challenge individual attitudes and beliefs -- and that is threatening. The goals of the PDS teams are to explore previous ways of functioning and generate new ideas; challenge old assumptions and replace them with new values -- and that is threatening. Along with the old ideas about children's learning potential, curriculum development, and educational values, comes a new set of ideas and issues that include the existence of racism, and racial equality; sexism and anti-discrimination; classism and equal potential for all. These are all wonderful ideas and if presented effectively can move the PDS to the next level. If

presented ineffectively they have the potential to cement a wall between the university and community and the classroom teacher. Opening and facilitating the communication between these parties will be vital in the implementation of the new educational reform.

Interviewed members suggested that counseling psychologists have the potential to be this vital link in facilitating this transition period. Support, dialogue, and encouragement are a few of the means through which they can have a substantial impact. The counseling psychologist could play a support role for the teachers as they struggle to let go of old beliefs and behaviors to adopt new ways of thinking and behaving. They can offer a means of facilitating dialogue about the frustrations, anger, and struggles experienced by the teachers during this emotional time of change.

A more specific example of a remediation function came from a school group that reported their recent discovery that, as a building, they had created a dysfunctional family. Although they described their relationships as caring, this group noted that they had avoided or ignored addressing each other about significant professional issues. There was little evidence of collegial support to develop professionally or to think about what was best for learners. The principal of this school reported that, through the help of the counseling psychologist, the leadership team members were better able to challenge each other. Granted, at the outset team members felt vulnerable and hurt by their insights, but they were able to come together in a stronger and more effective manner after having gone through the process.

A final example of a remediation perspective was provided by a teacher. She said that a counseling psychologist must be a caring, involved, objective and dedicated individual. Interestingly, she added that the counseling psychologist must act as if s/he had a vested interest in the PDS, even though, in this teacher's opinion, a counseling psychologist did not have a vested interest. It appears that this teacher conceptualized the counseling psychologist as an external consultant, whose function it was to enter the system only enough to fix it. This member viewed her own work from the remediation standpoint, therefore it is natural that she conceptualized the counseling psychologist's role similarly.

Development. Most of the examples categorized as developmental functions of counseling psychologists pertained to facilitating effective communication. Members appeared to value the counseling psychologist's ability to model, facilitate, and encourage enhanced communication.

Communication between and within the cultures that exist in the PDS context (school, university, and community) is heterogeneous in nature. One teacher educator noted an instance in which the counseling psychologist sought to negotiate the needs of the school and university cultures. The problem was about research written about the PDS site for the purpose of professional dissemination. Teachers were concerned about their image and their perception of the school's image. University members were concerned about censorship. However, the university colleagues were also concerned about image: communicating knowledge about the change process, getting their papers accepted for publication ,

and getting promoted. In this case the counseling psychologist was seen to "diplomatically blend the two cultures so that everyone's voice was heard". In this school, alternative solutions were generated and the decision was made, by all involved, that school based personnel would have an opportunity to read, respond and react to articles or papers before they went to press.

Another example came from a principal who reported that prior to PDS the faculty never processed "the process" of their interactions either socially or professionally. Once the PDS partnership began, the counseling psychologist helped the team to discuss their process. They began to make links between the interpersonal process and outcomes of their collaborative work. The group then asked the counseling psychologist to interrupt the process to help them confront things as they happened rather than to intervene after the fact. The reported desire for feedback and the desire to change communication patterns in this example suggests that the school endorsed a developmental view of the counseling psychologist.

Another leadership team chose to focus on improving honesty and clarity in communication. Clarifying became a large part of the leadership group's interactions. The principal reported that the counseling psychologist gave them information about use of language and practical skills (such as "it may be helpful if you said...") to facilitate understanding and clarity. The group came to appreciate how important it was to understand how, what and why people say what they say. The school leadership team began to use what they learned and worked to clarify meanings among the whole building

staff. In this example the counseling psychologist operated in a developmental fashion by promoting and assisting the change process.

Another school reported they wanted counseling psychologists to assist the individuals with establishing effective communication skills. Specifically, they reported that a counseling psychologists could help them to better understand themselves, their words and behaviors, in addition to helping them understand how they interact with others.

A teacher referenced specific competencies that a counseling psychologist can use to enhance the developmental role. They included an ability to demonstrate sensitivity, knowledge, a sense of commitment, and caring. She said sensitivity is important because developing a PDS is a fragile process and with changing beliefs and roles the members of the core team are, at times, pretty fragile themselves. She thought the counseling psychologists must have knowledge of the processes occurring as individuals interact with one another, and have a gentle, yet direct, and positive way to suggest alternative ways of behaving or communicating. She said that the counseling psychologist was helpful when s/he monitored the interactions of the core team and pointed out the weaknesses or misperceptions in their process in a non-accusatory way. Furthermore, she noted that an effective counseling psychologist maintained a delicate balance; s/he shared his/her expertise and yet validated the expertise of the teachers when an area, about teaching, was discussed that the counseling psychologist knew little about. It

was her observation that reframing the areas of expertise into a common language was helpful to all parties.

Prevention. The counseling psychologist can help to build understanding and explore the shift in power that occurs with the evolving PDS so adjustments can be made before problematic situations arise. For example, principals reported a need to learn to give up power without losing leadership. Some PDS leadership teams reported a need to learn how to make decisions together for the good of the whole, without threatening or alienating other teachers or administrators. Some PDS personnel reported a need to operationally define how to collaborate, given their new and dynamic roles, before ineffective patterns became entrenched. In most schools a military hierarchy exists that limits the flow of information, assigns both responsibility and blame to individual parties, and discourages cooperative learning and growth. Counseling psychologists can help us address questions such as: how are individuals to be held responsible for their work and be accountable to themselves and the group without the use of an authoritarian administration? How can we deconstruct the authoritarian system in a manner that prevents problems? These comments may illustrate the beginning of a prevention perspective.

While the above examples illustrate more emphasis on remediation and development, I want to reinforce my view that all three perspectives are valuable to PDSs. It is noteworthy that these examples illustrate the perspectives of PDS members. Currently more members view the role of counseling psychologists

as remedial. This illustrates our need to work on expanding our own thinking about this role.

The Future of the counseling Psychologist in Professional Development Schools

I see the role of the counseling psychologist as one with many facets. I am certain that the counseling psychologist must be a member of PDS staffs. Their role, like the roles of everyone in the school, is to help create the professional learning community, contribute to K-12 learning and to do research and study. My current state of thinking about the role of counseling psychologists is that they need to have a role in the leadership team, but do not have to act as the building coordinator. They have an area of expertise to contribute to the process of creating the PDS learning community as well as their professional areas of interest in inquiry. Their own inquiry is equally as important as the curricula and restructuring research carried out by teams of teachers and teacher educators.

On the one hand counseling psychologists are unique in that their contribution is concerning communication and building healthy relationships. On the other hand, they, like other professional in the school, have an area of expertise to contribute and scholarly work to be done.

The role of the counseling psychologist can range from remediation to development to prevention. On a day to day basis, modeling effective group member skills is as important a contribution as is working with problematic relationships.

The aforementioned conclusions about the role of the counseling psychologist apply to PDSs in general. However, I am

unable to provide a definitive answer as to the role of the counseling psychologist in any particular PDS. Out of respect for the unique needs, issues and process of each PDS, I refrain from prescribing a specific agenda for counseling psychologists. Instead, I recommend that teachers, teacher educators, parents, administrators and counseling psychologists need to figure this out together.

Reference

Maslow, A. (1970). Motivation and personality (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.